AFFAIRS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Attempts have been made at the official level to find out from the Russion authorities the basis of such reports in the media. In response, we were informed by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 8 January, 1992 that "according to the data in the Central and Republican Archives, no information whatsoever is available on the stay of the former President of the Indian National Congress, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, in the Soviet Union in 1945 and in subsequent years", and on 27 October, 1995 that "as a result of the investigations carried out at the Central Archival Collection of the Federal Security Service of Russia, and the Russian Centre for Retention and Perusal of Documents of Modern History, no information whatsoever has come to light on the stay of Subhas Chandra Bose on the territory of the former USSR in 1945 and in subsequent years".

Indo-China cooperation at international fora

2628. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the opportunity of the recent visit of President of the People's Republic of China was availed of to discuss the possibility of adopting a common approach by the two countries on issues concerning the World Trade Organisation; and

(b) whether joint approaches of a similar nature by the two countries are contemplated for discussions and negotiations with United Nations agencies and international financial institutions?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) and (b) During the recent visit of President Jiang Zemin to India, wide ranging discussions on issues of mutual interest were held. Both sides agreed on the need for establishing a constructive and cooperative relationship into the 21st Century. The two countries also agreed to expand bilateral economic cooperation.

Chaina is not yet a member of the WTO. India and China have established a cooperative working relationship in the United Nations and other international and regional fora. Our views on issues of primary concern to developing countries, namely, developmental issues, economic growth, creation of an open, just, equitable, rule-based and non-discriminatory global macro-economic environment, environment, and social development are largely similar. The two sides agree that dialogue on regional and international issues and cooperation in international fora are mutually beneficial and must be expanded.

Indians in Pakistani Jails

2629. SHRI RAJUBAHI A. PARMAR:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians in Pakistani jails at present;

(b) the number of Indians who have been there for over a year;

(c) the number of Indians lodged in Pak jails for criminal offences and how many for other illegalities; and

(d) the steps taken to repatriate them during the last one year?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) and (b) According to available information, there are at present 1318 Indian civilian prisoners in the custody of Pakistan, including 38 Indian children lodged at the Edhi Welfare Centre, Karachi. We are now assured by the Pakistan Goverment that the children are being released. 1233 prisoners have been in Pakistani custody for more than one year.

In addition, 54 Indian defence

personnel missing from the 1965 and 1971 wars are believed to be in custody in Pakistan.

(c) Pakistan does not provide information regarding these matters.

(d) The question of the early release and repatriation of all Indian prisoners under detention in Pakistan has been repeatedly taken up with the Government of Pakistan. The matter was also raised by the External Affairs Minister in his meeting with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 18/12/1996. Our efforts continue.

SAARC Foreign Ministers' conference on Suppression of Terrorism

2630. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the SAARC Foreign Ministers' Conference held in New Deli in December last stressed the need to end terrorism, especially international terrorism;

(b) if so, the details in this regard and the resolution if any adopted in the matter; and

(c) the steps taken by SAARC Members thereon so far?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Seventeenth Session of the SAARC Council of Ministers held in New Delhi in December 1996 reviewed progress in implementation of the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. The Session took note of recent international initiatives, particularly by the United Nations Organisation, to combat terrorism. In this regard, it called upon the Member States to cooperate regionally as well as support international measures towards the elimination of terrorism. In addition, it noted that some Member States had already enacted enabling legislation to give effect to the Convention, and urged other Member States to do so at the earliest. It emphasised the need for regular flow of relevant information to enable the SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) in Colombo to function effectively.

(c) Progress in implementation of the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism is reviewed at successive SAARC Summits and Council of Ministers' Meetings, and is to be reviewed next at the ninth SAARC Summit to be held at Male (Maldives) in May 1997. Annual meetings of Liaison Officers have been held since 1994 for exchanging information and making recommendations to the Council of Ministers for advancing cooperation under the Convention. The STOMD has been established at colombo to store, exchange and disseminate relevant information about terrorist incidents, activities, strategies and profiles. The subject was also discussed at the SAARC Conference on Cooperation in Police Matters, held in July 1996 at Colombo.

Delay in character verification cases by Delhi Police

2631. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a good number of cases of character verification etc. of the selected employees in the Government jobs are pending with the Delhi Police;

(b) if so, the details of all such cases which are pending for more than a month;

(c) the laid down policy of Government in such cases; and

(d) the action contemplated in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (d) No case of character verification is